



CHAPTER II.—(CONTINUED.)

After which, regardless of remonstrances and entreaties, she lathered, and rubbed and scrubbed Miss Peg O'Reilly's attenuated little body till it was as clean as her own.

As the girl stepped out of her bath again Mrs. Garrett was much satisfied with the result of her labor. The fair skin was still sadly disfigured by the bruises and the marks of half-healed sores; but it was as white as milk, and her tangled hair, thoroughly cleansed from the burden of mother earth it had carried about with it, and well brushed and combed, was transformed into a thick mane of flaxen curls, which only required attention to render them as glossy and soft as silk.

"Well, I never did see such a transfiguration in my life!" exclaimed the housekeeper. "Don't you feel a deal lighter than you did before?"

"I feel ever so comfortable," sighed the poor girl, as, lulled by the unusual warmth and nourishment she had received, her head sunk forward drowsily on her breast.

CHAPTER III.

LESS me, if you ain't going to sleep at two o'clock in the afternoon! Well, I don't know if it isn't the best thing you could do. Would you like me now to put you to bed and let you sleep it off, whilst I run out and see what I can get in the way of clothes to make you decent when you wake up again?"

"Bed!" ejaculated Peg, opening her eyes again with astonishment. "Am I to sleep in a bed?"

"Bless the gal! Did you think we meant to let you lie on the floor? That ain't the way Mr. James does things, I can tell you." And catching up the slight figure in her arms, Mrs. Garrett carried it up to the top story of the house, and laid it between her own sheets.

"A bed!" exclaimed the girl, wonderingly, as she drew her hands admiringly over the pillow. "My! isn't it beautiful! I feel as if I don't ever want to wake again."

"And I—and such as I—lie down in one every night, and grumble if the mattress ain't been turned—Lord forgive us!" thought Mrs. Garrett, and the thought prompted her to stoop down and kiss the poor pale face on the pillow.

Peg did not respond to the kiss. She only stared as it fell upon her brow on one side and shed weak tears.

"No one never did that to me before," she said, brokenly.

Something rose in the housekeeper's throat, and prevented an answer.

"You lie still and go to sleep," she said in parting, "and I'll be back within an hour."

When she had waked up from a long, refreshing sleep, and Mrs. Garrett, to her child's wonderment and delight, had rrayed her in decent linen, surmounted by a neat pink frock and black apron, and tied her fair curls off her face with a black ribbon, she looked so primly pretty and delicate, so like a conventional outcast in one of Lake Addison's pictures of the London poor, that Hamilton Shore, rushing into the housekeeper's snug little sitting-room that evening, paused in the act of flinging his books in a heap upon the table to exclaim: "Hallo! Garrett, where did you pick up that jolly girl?"

"That's a new house-maid as your uncle James has found for us, Master Hamilton," was the withering reply; "and neither Margaret nor I don't want none of your rude expressions nor remarks here." (For Mrs. Garrett had already decided that in order to maintain a proper distance between the two young people, who must be thrown so much together, the familiar appellation of "Peg" should be exchanged for that of "Margaret.")

"I'm not rude, am I, Margaret?" returned the boy, gayly; "and if you are the house-maid I don't see why you shouldn't be jolly at the same time. And I hope you'll give me a little more hot water in the morning than Garrett does. She's as stingy with it as a miser over his gold."

"You have as much hot water as your uncle does, Master Hamilton, and I should think that ought to be enough for the smooth-faced lad like yourself. And if you think Margaret has come here only to trot up and down-stairs to do your bidding, you're vastly mistaken. She's got her duty to learn as a good servant, and to try and repay your uncle for taking her into his house, and that won't leave her any leisure for fooling, as you'll soon find out."

Mrs. Garrett had cautioned Peg not to mention the police court and the work-house before Master Hamilton, and she had placed the shame of her antecedents so vividly before the girl's eyes that she sat by her side, mute as a mouse, lest by opening her mouth she should commit some solecism, and make Mrs. Garrett angry.

"Well, I suppose I can speak to her, or what is she here for?" cried Hamilton, unabashed; "and we can play a game of draughts together in the evenings, or read the same book. It's twice as jolly to read when you've got some one to talk it over with."

"Young gentlemen aren't in the habit of playing draughts with their uncle's house-maids," quoth the housekeeper, grimly.

"That's a good 'un! Don't I play with you?"

"And Peg—that is, Margaret—can't read."

"I'll teach her," replied the lad, who had taken a violent fancy to the mass of flaxen curls and the large blue eyes, from which the look of distress and fear were already fading. "Wouldn't you like to learn, Peg?" he continued to the girl.

"Yes, very much," said Peg, shyly.

"Her name is Margaret, and not Peg, Master Hamilton."

"Why, you said Peg yourself just now; besides, it's a deal shorter and easier to remember, and I mean to call her by it, into the bargain."

"You're a saucy fellow, and I've spoiled you altogether," says Mrs. Garrett, who only spoke the truth in saying so. The boy answered her by sitting down on her lap, and kissing her cheek. He was a handsome, lively lad, with an insouciant air about him that most people mistook for honesty. He generally got his own way with the housekeeper, who had known him from a baby, and therefore, as a rule, he behaved well to her; but if she thwarted him in a single thing, however trifling, he would fling himself out of the room in a pet, and sulk for the next twenty-four hours. Mrs. Garrett, as she watched him enter into eager conversation with Peg O'Reilly, and play with her as though she had been his equal, wished she had thought of asking Mr. James whether his nephew had not better occupy the dining-room in the evenings for the future. It had been all very well for him to sit in her little apartment when there was no one but his old nurse to wait upon him, but a young girl about the place made things different. However, Mr. James was with his beloved Cannibals, and did not return home that evening, so the boy and girl, after the fashion of youngsters, had considerably advanced in intimacy before they retired to rest. On the next morning, the whole occurrence seemed to have passed out of Ruthven's mind, for he eat his breakfast and rang for his boots before a single word had been spoken between Mrs. Garrett and himself respecting his importation of the day before. But as she saw he was about to leave the house without attending to it, she made bold to broach the subject.

"About that young girl you brought home yesterday, Mr. James?"

"Oh, yes! By the way," he said carelessly, as if he had just recalled the transaction, "how is she going on?"

"Pretty well, sir, considering all things. She seems anxious to please and willing to learn; but—"

"But what, Mrs. Garrett? I'm in a hurry, as usual."

"Do you wish Master Hamilton to occupy my room of an evening, as he has been used to do, sir?"

"I'm sure I don't care. I leave all these things to you, you know."

"Yes, sir; but with a young girl in the house—"

"Does she look dangerous, then? Will she bite him?"

"Lor', Mr. James, you will have your joke. But don't you think it would be more like a gentleman if Master Hamilton were to begin to occupy the upper rooms, now that he is nearly as tall as yourself, sir?"

"Put him just where you like, Mrs. Garrett—on the tiles, if it suits your convenience. I leave everything to you," reiterated Ruthven, as he left the house.

The upshot of which was that the housekeeper, having communicated the

gist of the conversation to Master Hamilton, got laughed at in answer, and saw him sitting closer to Peg O'Reilly than before through the remainder of the evening.

A separation between them, however, was speedily to ensue, and it came about through the instrumentality of Lake Addison, R. A.

This man was Ruthven's most intimate friend; the one who oftenest invaded the little house at Kensington, and lured the dramatist from the attractions of the club; and Peg O'Reilly had not been one of the family many days before the artist noticed her appearance.

"Who's that girl that brought in the glasses just now, Ruthven?"

"Only a kind of sub to Mrs. Garrett, who's getting too old to do all my work."

"Where did you pick her up?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"Because it's in my mind to borrow her. Will you lend her to me?"

"As a model, of course?"

"Yes. For my new picture. She has just the face I want."

"Is there anything in it, then?"

"There is everything in it. It is wonderfully expressive."

"I must look at it next time she comes in."

"And her eyes are beautiful. Large, limpid, and almond-shaped. She would be useful to me in a dozen ways."

"I had no idea she was a wonder. Make what arrangements you like with Mrs. Garrett, Addison. Whenever she can spare her, the child is entirely at your service."

Mr. Addison secured the housekeeper's good will on behalf of his project, and for some days Miss Peg O'Reilly visited his studio, and sat, mute with astonishment, whilst he made various studies of her face and figure. At the end of that time, he repeated the question he had first put to his friend: "Where on earth did you pick up that child, Ruthven?" And Ruthven also repeated:

"Why are you so anxious to know?"

"Because I am sure she is not of common birth. The contour of her features and the formation of her limbs, tell me so. She has the most delicately formed little feet, and her nails are filbert-shaped. You will never make me believe that girl was born of roughs."

"Did I ever try to make you believe it?"

"No; but you're so close upon the matter altogether, I half suspect, you old dog, you know more about it than you choose to say."

"If it's come to this," said Ruthven, laughing, "I must make a clean breast of it. I have only kept silence for the child's sake, so you must respect my confidence. The fact is, I picked her up in a police court, where she was charged with stealing onions."

"Was she innocent?"

"I never inquired. I saw she was starving, and she told me she was friendless. So I paid the fines, and brought her home to Mrs. Garrett's care. If she turns out well, she will want to forget the police court, so I thought it best to keep her counsel. There is the long and the short of it."

"Ruthven, I have always said you were the best fellow in the world; but, mark my words, that child is better born than she appears. Can't you find out anything about her antecedents?"

"Well, to tell the truth," replied Ruthven, shamefacedly, "I have tried, without success. Mrs. Garrett told me the girl's mother had died in a certain work-house, so I went there to gain all the information concerning her I could. But they had none to give me. It was the old story. A woman who called herself Nan O'Reilly, had come into the house some ten years ago, in a dying condition, with this child in her arms, and the authorities, knowing nothing further, were compelled, on the mother's death, to bring her up. Three years ago they drafted her out into domestic service, from which she ran away, and they had never heard of her again till I came across her in court. Depend upon it, the child is nothing more than she seems."

"I don't believe it. Besides she doesn't seem so. She is starved and pinched at present, but she will be a beautiful and graceful woman some day."

"Poor Peg! I really must have a look at her by and by," replied Ruthven, quietly amused.

But the look resulted in a wonderful change for our little heroine. Ruthven observing that his friend Addison's opinion was correct with respect to her personal qualities, had a talk with Hamilton Shore on the subject, when the lad assured his uncle that Peg showed such aptitude for learning that he began to think he should be doing her an injustice by bringing her up in a menial capacity.

"There is no doubt she will have beauty, and Hamilton says she is very sharp. If I give the child a little education, therefore, I shall be able, by and by, perhaps, to introduce her to the stage, and put her in the way of earning her own living, and any one will do to help Mrs. Garrett with her pails and brushes."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

MORGAN & HAMILTON,
Contractors, Builders,
Cabinet Makers
AND UNDERTAKERS.

FARMINGTON, NEW MEXICO.

The Smelter City Brewing Association.

Manufacturers of

Pure, Wholesome, Home Brewed Beer, and
the only Pure Ice in the market.

Durango, - - Colorado.

BEAUTIFUL HOMES

To all wishing to buy GRAND MESA LANDS, under ditch, with ample stock therein for irrigation, just north of Farmington, N. M., I will sell any size block, from one to eighty acres, cheap, on easy terms.

Very Choice Lots for Sale

just north of the public school building, to sell, a 40-acre tract, two miles from town, and an 80-acre tract with a 2-room house, cellar and small orchard, also a 10-acre tract of good land, well situated on the county road.

Any of these pieces of property is close enough to the public school for children to attend.

For further information apply to owner,

HUGH GRIFFIN

.... Or

V. R. N. Greaves, Agent
Farmington, N. M.

